

## Challenges In The First Century Church

### The Challenge Of Sin

#### **Tremendous growth in the church.**

Acts 2:41 – Three thousand

Acts 4:4 – Five thousand

Acts 6:7, *“Number of disciples increased greatly.”*

Acts 9:31, *“So the church throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified; and, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, was multiplied.”*

Acts 11:24, *“... and much people was added unto the Lord.”*

### The Challenge Of Sin

#### **Acts 5:1-11 – First recorded sin in the church.**

1. Peter exposed their sin and they both died.
2. Acts 5:11, *“And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all that heard these things.”*

### The Challenge Of Sin

#### **1 Corinthians 5:1-7 – Even a small amount of leaven would contaminate the whole lump.**

1. Note: verses 3-4 – By the authority of Christ, the guilty was to be disciplined.
2. Keep the church morally pure.
  - Ephesus. Revelation 2:2
  - Thyatira. Revelation 2:20
  - Sardis. Revelation 3:4

### The Challenge From Authorities

#### **Authority of the Jews. Acts 4:5-6**

Court put on trial ... *“Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard.”*

Acts 4:19-20; cf. 1 Peter 4:14-16

### The Challenge From Authorities

#### **Authority of the Jews. Acts 5:17ff**

1. *“We must obey God rather than men ...”*  
Acts 5:29
2. Note: Acts 5:41-42
3. Stephen stoned. Acts 7

## The Challenge From Authorities

### **Authority of the Jews. Acts 9:1ff**

- *“But Saul, yet breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord ...”*

## The Challenge From Authorities

### **Authority of Herod. Acts 12:1-2**

1. Death of James.
2. Arrest of Peter.

### **Authority of the Magistrates in Philippi. Acts 16:22ff**

1. Paul and Silas arrested, beaten, and imprisoned. Acts 16:22ff
2. Returned to Lydia’s house. Acts 16:35ff

## The Challenge From False Teachers

Jesus warned. Matthew 7:15; 24:4-5

Apostles warned.

1. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 – Satan has ministers.
2. 1 Timothy 4:1-3 – Some would depart from the faith.
3. 2 Timothy 4:1-4 – Men would turn from the faith.
4. 1 John 4:1-3 – False prophets gone out into the world.

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## The Challenge From False Teachers

- *“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”* 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22
- *“Hold the pattern of sound words ...”*  
2 Timothy 1:13
- No longer be tossed to and fro.  
Ephesians 4:14
- Not be carried away. Hebrews 13:9-19

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## The Challenge From False Teachers In The Leadership

Elders to watch the flock. Acts 20:28-30

1. Danger from without. Verse 29
2. Danger from within. Verse 30
  - a. Paul had warned them night and day *“with tears.”* Verse 31
  - b. Commended them to the *“word of His grace which is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified.”* Verse 32

## The Challenge From False Teachers In The Leadership

Preachers to “preach the word.”

2 Timothy 4:2

1. Some would preach the whims of the people. 2 Timothy 4:3; cf. Jeremiah 5:31-32

## The Challenge From Controversy In The Church

Some taught Gentiles to be circumcised.

Acts 15:1-5

Truth revealed by:

- a. Approved example. Acts 15:7
- b. Necessary inference. Acts 15:12
- c. Direct statement. Acts 15:13
- d. Respect for God's silence. Acts 15:24

➤ Peter and Barnabas influenced by this controversy. Galatians 2:11-13 (cf. 2:4-5)

## The Challenge From Apathy

- Loss of zeal. Romans 10:2; cf. Hebrews 10:32; Romans 12:11; Hebrews 6:9-12; Titus 2:14
- Loss of spiritual interest. 2 Timothy 2:15; Hebrews 5:11f; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Hebrews 10:24-25
- Consumed with secular interest. Luke 8:14; 1 John 2:15; Luke 14:15ff
- Hard heart – without emotion. cf. Psalms 19; 2 Peter 1:9; Ephesians 4:17-24; cf. 2 Corinthians 7:10-11; Romans 9:1ff; 10:1-3

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## The Challenge From Apathy

- Repentance. Revelation 2:4-5; 3:3; 3:17-19; cf. 2 Corinthians 7:10-11
- Reaffirm priority in life. Philippians 3:14-16; 18-19; Matthew 6:33
- Be devoted to the Lord. Matthew 22:37; 10:34; Romans 12:1-2; cf. 2 Corinthians 12:15
- Labor in the vineyard. Matthew 9:37-38; cf. Revelation 22:3
- Think. Colossians 3:2; 2 Corinthians 10:5; cf. Philippians 4:8

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## Application And Conclusion

- God wants people to confront sin.
- Discipline must be practiced to protect the church and save the soul of the one in sin.
- *"We must obey God rather than men."*
- False teachers must be challenged.
- When we feel isolated, even paralyzed, remember we are not alone. *"Yet will I leave (me) seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal"* (1 Kings 19:18)